

**Alberta
Cattle
Commission**

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GRASS

ROUTES



The Alberta cattle producer newsletter.

Inside

2

- Cattle Seized
- Need For Value Based Marketing

3

- Risk Management Program
- Matter of Fat

4

- Endangered Species



New Special Places 2000 launched

Changes to program meet most of cattle industry's concerns

The Alberta Cattle Commission is pleased that the Special Places 2000 policy announced by the provincial government in March has been significantly changed from the original proposal. The revised policy shifts from a preservation to a conservation focus and balances conservation and development goals.

Many of the cattle industry's concerns have been addressed in the revised policy:

- grazing will continue in any Special Places area where grazing previously occurred,
- the Special Places nomination process requires scientific support for consideration,
- local stakeholder committees will automatically be involved in the nomination process and have veto power over any designation,
- private land will not be considered unless the owner wishes so, and
- corridors between Special Places areas and buffer zones around Special Places areas

will not be considered.

However, there will still be concerns when public land that supports grazing is designated as a Special Place.

The program proposes to emphasize new Special Places in the foothills, grassland and parkland regions of Alberta. These are the settled areas of Alberta where agriculture is the principal industry. Clearly Special Places will not target cultivated land, so the impact will mostly be felt on public land used for grazing. It is important to recognize that the grassland, foothills and parkland developed under grazing and that ranchers have been doing an excellent job of sustaining grazing for both cattle and wildlife.

We are also pleased that the government will consider conservation initiatives in the entire prairie region (such as Saskatchewan's Grasslands National Park) before choosing candidate sites.

Did you know?

Recent U.S. research using 1,867 animals from 14 cattle breeds indicates that marbling is responsible for at most five per cent of the variation in palatability (taste, juiciness and tenderness).

ACC supports 4-H through scholarships

The Alberta Cattle Commission is proud to show its support for young beef producers by offering two brand new 4-H scholarships. Each scholarship is worth \$500 and will be awarded annually to one female and one male recipient who is a past or present 4-H

beef member.

The 4-H selection committee will consider leadership, community and communications skills as well as academic standing. The scholarships are available to students in their second year of studies and beyond in any post secondary institution.

Strength from the **ground up.**

Aging not a concern for Alberta beef

Alberta Cattle Commission research on product aging shows that on average, Alberta beef hits retail shelves 12 days after slaughter. It takes on average, one day to process the carcass, 5.9 days to deliver Alberta beef from the packer to the retailer and another 5.1 to deliver the beef from the retailer to the consumer (totals range from 5.7 to 18.5 days). Other research shows that 80 per cent of the effect of aging takes place in the first seven days - 95 per cent occurs in the first 14 days.



SPCA seize cattle in two incidents

The Alberta SPCA seized cattle and laid charges in two separate incidents in March. The seizures were widely publicized and in one case involved a producer who has been charged before.

A few animal abuse incidents like these can erode the confidence of consumers and government in the production practices of the entire beef industry.

Producers can look after the interests of the industry by helping their neighbors avoid these situations. One way producers can do this is by calling the Animal Care Action line and Resource Team (ALeRT).

ALeRT is a service from the producer-based Alberta Foundation for Animal Care. The action line is a confidential alternative for producers to report any concerns regarding livestock care. After a report, a team of trained producer volunteers use non-confron-

tational solutions to help producers with animal care problems.

ALeRT is a way for the cattle industry to become involved before animal neglect becomes abuse and damages the reputation of the industry. It will hopefully reduce the number of cases requiring intervention by the SPCA. (Situations involving obvious abuse warranting enforcement are handled by the Alberta SPCA).

Canadian livestock producers have voluntary codes of practice that cover all elements in the care and handling of farm animals. They were developed by industry organizations in consultation with the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies and Agriculture Canada.

To report a potential problem or for more information call the ALeRT line at 1-800-506-2273.

Study shows up to \$250 difference in similar cattle

New research shows that there can be up to a \$250 difference in the actual value of similar feedlot cattle. The difference is the result of a 15 per cent variation in saleable meat yield.

The 1994 national beef carcass cutout study found that the variability in value came

from:

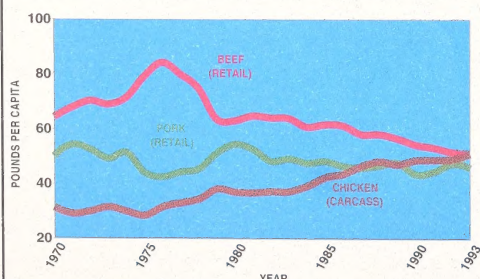
- differences in lean meat yield that ranged from 53.9 to 67.5 per cent,
- sex of the animal (heifers yielded an average of 0.6 per cent higher than steers), and
- the amount of waste fat beyond trim.

This wide variation in carcass value is part of the reasoning behind the drive toward value based marketing - the assessment of value on a carcass by carcass basis.

Technologies being developed for value based marketing such as electronic identification and video imaging analysis could award or discount producers depending on the saleable yield of their cattle. This could send clearer market signals back to the commercial and purebred sectors as well as make beef more competitive with other meats.

The national beef carcass cutout study was conducted by researchers from the Lacombe Research Station, Manitoba Agriculture and Agriculture Canada. It was jointly supported by the Alberta Cattle Commission, Ontario Cattlemen's Association, Cargill Foods, Better Beef and the Canadian Agri-Food Development Initiative.

CANADIAN PER CAPITA MEAT CONSUMPTION



SOURCE: STATISTICS CANADA, AG CANADA, CANFAX



Risk management program now available

As an alternative to government stabilization programs, a new options program will enable Canadian cattle producers to hedge their risk without worrying about the exchange rate between Canadian and U.S. dollars.

The Cattle Options Pilot Program (COPP) will allow cattle producers to choose a level of price protection that is right for them. COPP options are currency translated and written on the Canadian dollar value of a Chicago Mercantile Exchange live cattle futures contract.

Although many beef producers already use some form of risk management, the program is expected to make it simpler. The options will be sold through the federal Farm Credit Corp.

Beef producers will be able to buy as much price protection as they want, limited

only by the size of their operation.

The project was proposed by the Canadian Cattlemen's Association after the National Tripartite Stabilization Program ended in 1993. The cattle industry has resisted attempts to belong to any other government programs.

Trading started late April and is open only to cattle producers who complete a COPP training program. For more information on the COPP training program call: Southern Alberta - Lynn Malmberg (403) 934-5925, Northern Alberta - Brenda Schoepp (403) 963-5483 or Larry Rude (403) 467-6407.

1-800 cattle news line

Broadcast media will now have late breaking cattle industry news available to them any time with the Alberta Cattle Commission's (ACC) 1-800 news line.

The news line will offer the latest stories and comments by cattle industry representatives to media free of charge in an easy to access news format. Late breaking story ideas are faxed to 38 broadcast media who can call a toll free number for prerecorded comments by industry spokespersons.

The economic realities of the radio industry mean fewer radio stations are dedicating attention to Alberta's second largest industry - agriculture. Often regular news staff are reluctant to report on agriculture because of a lack of knowledge or a lack of material. As well, many stations have reduced news staff to a bare minimum.

This new service will make it easier for media to cover the cattle industry and hopefully increase awareness of agricultural issues among producers, the general public and the media.

Beef promotion big hit

The latest beef nutrition package called *A Matter of Fat* has been a big success for the Beef Information Centre (B.I.C.). The new program has generated the biggest response yet for a program of its kind.

A Matter of Fat is a kit designed to make it easier for nutrition educators, health professionals and doctors to help people identify the sources of fat in their diet.

Some B.I.C. offices were receiving 400 requests a day for the package. The original production run of 15,000 educational teaching kits and 150,000 consumer brochures has been exhausted.

The Alberta Cattle Commission contributed an additional \$210,000 to the program to reprint another 15,000 kits and 150,000 brochures as well as sponsor a direct mailing to doctors and program ads in medical magazines.

Second RCMP livestock investigator coming soon
Alberta Agriculture will be hiring an additional RCMP livestock investigator. The new investigator will be based in Edmonton and handle cases North of Red Deer. Cpl. Emil Smetaniuk will continue to work out of Calgary servicing Southern Alberta. Sharing the investigative workload will give the inspectors more time for involvement in the Rural Crime Watch program, working with brand inspectors and assisting the meat inspection branch. The investigators rely heavily on brand inspectors. In 1992, brand inspectors culled 12,500 head at auctions and returned them to their rightful owners. To report missing or stolen cattle call (403) 291-6200.



Endangered species a danger to cattle?

The federal government has begun a process to develop endangered species legislation that could have serious implications for the cattle industry.

The industry's use of large areas of relatively unchanged natural spaces makes it very vulnerable to restrictions on habitat use on public and private land.

There is a patchwork of provincial and federal acts which the government wants to harmonize under a national framework. Currently Manitoba, Ontario and New Brunswick have endangered species legislation and there are 12 federal acts that protect wildlife.

Earlier in the year, the federal government distributed a discussion paper and solicited response on the need for endangered species legislation.

The Alberta Cattle Commission submitted

"Eat Beef" chuckwagon

A group of 125 cattle industry organizations and individuals pooled their resources to sponsor a chuckwagon canvas for the 1995 Calgary Stampede chuckwagon races.

Team Eat Beef bid \$26,000 for the outfit of Tyler Helmig of Leduc. Helmig is currently fifth in the world chuckwagon standings and is a cattle producer himself.

Team Eat Beef was formed to create maximum exposure for beef directed towards the thousands of consumers who view the chuckwagon races live or on television during the Calgary Stampede. Helmig will also represent *Team Eat Beef* for the rest of the chuckwagon season.

The Alberta Cattle Commission donated \$500 towards the *Eat Beef* chuckwagon canvas.

For more information phone/fax Jan Lee at (403) 948-5877 or phone Marilyn Callway at (403) 931-3431.

that cattle producers have demonstrated their commitment to properly manage and protect the soil, water, air and range resources on which their livelihood depends. Producers have a major role to play in any future attempts to address conservation of natural systems and protection of biodiversity.

Any endangered species legislation would require the following elements to be successful:

- the involvement and commitment of all major stakeholders in the development of any policies and programs,
- a clear definition of program objectives in the context of sustainability and biological diversity,
- recognition of the economic implications of any policies and programs and the burden carried by different stakeholders,
- a more general landscape approach to conservation, where the protection of specific species and ecosystems is built into an overall resource management plan,
- the development and implementation of long term, comprehensive recovery and management plans for species and/or ecosystems considered under pressure; these plans would include the major stakeholders from the beginning, and
- emphasis on education, extension and cooperative action in the implementation of recovery and management plans.

Sandwich study favors beef

A U.S. consumer group called the Center for Science in the Public Interest recently compared the healthfulness of different lunch sandwiches and beef came out very well. In fact beef was the second healthiest of the 170 sandwiches tested. For example, the study found the typical tuna salad sandwich with mayo had 55 grams of fat, egg and chicken salad sandwiches with mayo had 40 grams of fat while roast beef with mustard had only 22 grams of fat. Beef enjoyed positive publicity as the study received extensive media coverage across North America.